



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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OPERATION "DC LOCKDOWN" YIELDS LARGEST DRUG BUST IN THE HISTORY OF PASCO COUNTY

Tampa, Florida - United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton, together with Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Special Agent in Charge Mark R. Trouville, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent in Charge Susan L. McCormick, Pasco County Sheriff Bob White, Marion County Sheriff Ed Dean, and Colonel John T. Czernis, Director of the Florida Highway Patrol, announce today the return of two indictments by a federal grand jury arising from Operation "DC LOCKDOWN," an ongoing Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation targeting the distribution of cocaine in Dade City and the surrounding area. The attached chart outlines the charges against the defendants.

The charges against the defendants include conspiring to possess large quantities of cocaine with the intent to distribute it. The indictments allege that, on August 25, 2009, officers observed a tractor trailer back into 12019 Duck Lake Canal Road, Dade City. The Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) stopped the truck after it departed the property, and found \$2,240,456 hidden in its fuel tank. Lazaro Merino was driving the truck.

On August 26, 2009, DEA and ICE agents and the Pasco County Sheriff's Office

(PCSO) executed a search warrant at 12019 Duck Lake Canal Road. Buried in a barn on the property, they found fifty-two kilograms of cocaine, with a street value of more than \$1.5 million, and \$119,940 in cash. They also seized \$156,165 in cash from the house on the property and a loaded 9mm Smith & Wesson handgun. Charges against Defendants Rogelio Zarco Perez, Jorge Castillo Ramos, Audel Arrison Lopez, a/k/a "Kiko," a/k/a "Elias Lopez Ramo, arise in part from the evidence found at the property.

DEA agents and Marion County Sheriff's deputies then searched a pickup truck at 323 Oak Track Run Ocala, Florida, an address to which they had previously followed a vehicle from 12019 Duck Lake Canal Road. In a computer box in the truck bed, they found approximately \$130,000 and five kilograms of cocaine. Jose Hector Cruz, Jesus Lozano Alvarez, and Valentin Lozano Alvarez were in the truck at the time of the search.

The search at 323 Oak Track Run led to a search of 309 Oak Track Radial Road, Ocala, the home of Jesus Lozano Alvarez's girlfriend, where officers seized approximately \$42,000 in a duffle bag belonging to Jesus Lozano Alvarez.

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton commented, "This investigation represents law enforcement at its finest—federal, state, and county agencies partnering to target and takedown major drug trafficking organizations. I commend the officers assigned to this case whose cooperation, coordination, and hard work led to this result."

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.

This case was investigated under OCDETF's Operation "DC LOCKDOWN," comprised of agents, detectives, and officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration,

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, the Marion County Sheriff's Office, and the Florida Highway Patrol. It will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher F. Murray.